



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor

Michael S. Steele
Lt. Governor

Mary Ann Saar
Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Mark Vernarelli (410) 339-5065

SWIMMING TO CATCH THEIR MAN

Hagerstown K-9 officers' pursuit of escapee included 50-yard swim

Commissioner issues commendation

TOWSON, MD (June 10, 2005)—Correctional officers from the Hagerstown region K-9 headquarters were honored by Commissioner of Correction Frank Sizer on Thursday, June 9 for their effort in recapturing an escapee last week. The officers' pursuit included a grueling chase through thick woods, a 50-yard swim across Antietam Creek, and a difficult uphill climb that ended with the suspect captured after a struggle in a residential neighborhood.

"These officers not only went above and beyond the call of duty," said Commissioner Sizer. "Their persistence protected a neighborhood from this potentially dangerous escapee."

The drama began around 9:30 a.m. on June 2, when 44-year old inmate John Gange, a Pasadena man serving 25 years for assault and other serious charges, walked away from his job at the Central Kitchen on the grounds of the Maryland Correctional Institution-Hagerstown, one of three medium-security Division of Correction prisons on Roxbury Road just south of Hagerstown.

After a grueling daylong search which included officers tramping through woods thick with briars and walking steep hillsides, Lt. Mark Tyler of the Canine Unit spotted Gange in chest-deep water as he emerged from Antietam Creek, a historic waterway located east of the prisons.

"I jumped into Antietam Creek from the west bank and began swimming to the east bank. I was yelling commands for Gange to stop and get on the ground the entire time I was swimming across the creek," said Lt. Mark Tyler. Gange refused the repeated commands to stop, and took off up the hillside. Eventually, five other officers and four of their dogs also swam across.

---more---

Gange, who continued to refuse orders to stop and surrender, made it up a steep hill, and emerged from the thick woods in Roxbury Hill, a residential area that ends in a cul-de-sac at the edge of the woods. Combative until the end, Gange was finally handcuffed after struggling with Lieutenant Tyler and Sgt. Jamey Moats.

“We’re grateful to the Maryland State Police and the Washington County Sheriff’s Office for their help,” said Captain Mike Ocker, commander of the DOC Canine Unit. “And I can’t say enough for my officers. What they did was maintain one of the best searches in some of the toughest conditions imaginable. They were great.”

On Thursday, June 9, Commissioner of Correction Frank Sizer officially honored the officers for their effort during a ceremony at the Maryland Correctional Training Center.

Correctional officers from the Hagerstown prisons, troopers from the Maryland State Police Aviation Division, and deputies from the Washington County Sheriff’s Office all played key roles in the search and capture.

###